

## Quick Facts

### About... Staphylococcal Food Poisoning

#### What is Staphylococcal Food Poisoning?

Staphylococcal (staff-uh-low-COCK-ull) food poisoning is caused by a toxin (poison) made by *Staphylococcus* bacteria, usually *Staphylococcus aureus*. These bacteria are found on the skin, in the nose, mouth, and throat of many healthy people. These bacteria sometimes cause skin infections, such as acne or boils.

#### How is Staphylococcal Food Poisoning spread?

You can get staphylococcal food poisoning by eating food contaminated with staphylococcal bacteria. Food is usually contaminated when someone handles food with bare hands, especially after touching the face or mouth. If the food is not cooked thoroughly or properly kept hot or cold, the bacteria can grow and produce toxin in the food. Foods commonly involved include ham, poultry, filled pastries, custard, egg salad and potato salad.

Staphylococcal food poisoning is NOT spread from person-to-person.

#### What are the symptoms of Staphylococcal Food Poisoning?

- diarrhea
- vomiting
- nausea
- cramps
- weakness

Symptoms start suddenly within 1-6 hours after eating contaminated food. The illness goes away on its own, usually within a day.

#### How do I know if I have Staphylococcal Food Poisoning?

See your doctor. The illness is usually diagnosed by symptoms and quick onset, but your doctor may order tests to rule out other conditions.

#### How is Staphylococcal Food Poisoning treated?

There is no medicine to cure staphylococcal food poisoning. There is no vaccine (shot) to prevent it. Your doctor may recommend medicine to lessen the symptoms or fluids to prevent dehydration (severe fluid loss). Drinking lots of fluids helps your body replace fluids lost by diarrhea and vomiting.

### **How can Staphylococcal Food Poisoning be prevented?**

- Keep hot foods hot (at or above 140° F) and cold foods cold (at or below 41° F).
- Do not store foods longer than four hours at room temperature.
- Cool cooked foods as soon as possible using shallow, uncovered containers or covered containers vented to allow heat to escape.
- Cool and reheat foods one time.
- Exclude food handlers with exposed infections, such as a boil or cut on the hands, from food preparation and handling.
- Touch food with bare hands as little as possible. Do not handle food with bare hands after touching your face or if you have open sores on your hands.
- Wash hands with soap and water before preparing food. If you touch your face while preparing food, wash your hands handling food again.

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**Indiana State  
Department of Health**